

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CARACA 04791 261646Z

ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-10 LAB-04

NSAE-00 SIL-01 PA-01 ICA-11 /050 W

-----126927 270412Z /11

R 261537Z MAY 78

FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2430

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB VE

SUBJECT: WORK STOPPAGE BY DOCTORS

1. FOLLOWING THE RESOLUTION OF THE TEACHERS' STRIKE (SEE SEPTTEL, "THIS WEEK IN VENEZUELA," MAY 26), THE GOVERNMENT FACES A SECOND LABOR CRISIS, A WORK STOPPAGE SCHEDULED MAY 26 BY DOCTORS OF HOSPITALS UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH. THE ONE-DAY WORK STOPPAGE WAS CALLED BY THE VENEZUELAN MEDICAL FEDERATION (FMV) FOLLOWING ITS REJECTION OF GOVERNMENT ORDERED AUGMENTATION OF WAGES BY PRESIDENTIAL DECREE. THE MINORITY ACCION DEMOCRATICA PARTY FACTION OF THE FMV, ACCORDING TO NEWSPAPER REPORTS, OPPOSES THE STRIKE, BELIEVING THAT PROGRESS WAS BEING MADE IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENT. IT IS PROBABLE THAT A LARGE PERCENTAGE OF AD-AFFILIATED DOCTORS WILL NOT JOIN THE STRIKE. THE FMV HAS DECLARED THAT EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICE WILL CONTINUE TO BE PERFORMED.

2. COMMENT: POLITICS IS CLEARLY PAYING A ROLE IN THE DOCTORS' STRIKE AS WAS THE CASE IN THE TEACHERS' STRIKE. DOCTORS BELONGING TO OPPOSITION PARTIES APPARENTLY SEE POLITICAL CAPITAL IN KEEPING THE PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENT AND BELIEVE THAT ELECTION YEAR POLITICS WILL

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MAKE THE GOVERNMENT MORE AMENDABLE TO GENEROSITY. THE GOVERNMENT ON THE OTHER HAND IS EQUALLY DETERMINED TO DAMPEN EXCESSIVE WAGE INCREASES IN THE ELECTION CONTEXT. IF THE TEACHERS' STRIKE IS AN EXAMPLE, THE GOVERNMENT WILL TRY TO HOLD A FIRM LINE WITH THE DOCTORS ON WAGES BUT PROBABLY WILL REMAIN OPEN TO COMPROMISE ON NON-SALARY DEMANDS.

VAKY

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